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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8691
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RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3885
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9612
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3406
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2102
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0840
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001896

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEK MEDIA ACCUSES U.S. OF SAIPOV MURDER

REF: A. A) TASHKENT 1887

[1](#)B. B) BISHKEK 1320

Classified By: P/E Chief Ted Burkhalter; reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) On October 29, Uzbek state-run television in Namangan Province broadcast a program describing murdered journalist Alisher Saipov in terms much the same as those used by the MFA in its October 30 diplomatic note (ref A). Saipov was accused of being a tool of foreign (including western) influences, mention was made of his having traveled to Iran and Pakistan (i.e., terrorist sympathies), and he was blamed for stirring up trouble between Uzbekistan and its neighbors.

On October 30, the GOU-front internet website, press-uz.info, ran a Russian language article accusing "Americans" of killing Saipov. Specifically, the article mentioned the Soros Foundation, which it claimed funded Saipov (note - NED actually funded him), and then inferred that Soros was backed by the USG. The article opined that the Americans were upset that their puppet had run an interview with Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan leader Tohir Yuldashev and wanted to get rid of him. An Uzbek language version had not yet appeared on the site, as of October 31.

Comment

[1](#)2. (C) The GOU reaction to the Saipov murder appears both oddly frenetic yet fairly well coordinated. First Deputy Foreign Minister Nematov, in addressing the murder October 30, even raised with Ambassador meetings Embassy officers had held over the past several years with individuals the GOU accuses of extremism and terrorism. In this and other meetings, Nematov has repeatedly raised the spectre of regime change and U.S. plots (always adding nicely that all this was before the Ambassador's arrival in September).

[1](#)3. (C) Beyond the obviously coordinated nature of the GOU response is the question "why?" Leaving aside whether Tashkent was actually involved in this murder (which only a thorough investigation can establish), there are underlying factors which may account for the frenzied Uzbek reaction to these events. USG money continues to flow to opposition groups, human rights activists, and independent media in and around Uzbekistan, and these recipients are, generally speaking, more than critical of the GOU. With the color revolutions as a backdrop, it is quite likely some Uzbek officials continue to believe that our policies amount to regime change. They see that we are supporting individuals and groups that want regime change - or political reform that

would all but amount to regime change. Added to this, many opposition figures, human rights activists, and independent journalists have contact with radical organizations like Hizb-ut-Tahrir (even if for entirely legitimate purposes), and this organization is illegal in Uzbekistan and is seen by the GOU as a mortal threat. Given these facts, and the paranoid atmosphere within the Uzbek government, stirring the pot is no great feat. The Saipov murder is by no means played out, and the consequences at this point are hard to predict. We will continue to engage the GOU as much as possible, with a view toward overcoming past strains and restoring trust, addressing core human rights concerns and renewing cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

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